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INFO RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 0034
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 0167
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 2547
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KARACHI 000463

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SIPDIS

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TAGS: PGOV PREL PTER PK

SUBJECT: BALOCHISTAN - DERA BUGTI CONFLICT REIGNITES

Classified By: CLASSIFIED BY CONSUL GENERAL KAY ANSKE, REASONS 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: A July 19 bomb blast, claimed by the Balochistan Republican Army (BRA), killed a Pakistan Petroleum Limited engineer and several security officers and reignited a conflict between the GOP and Baloch nationalists in Balochistan's Dera Bugti, Kohlu and Jarrarabad districts. The media has not been allowed into the conflict zone and accurate casualty estimates are hard to ascertain. The political wing of the BRA, the Balochistan Republican Party (BRP), formally known as the Jamhoori Watan Party, spearheaded a successful July 25 general strike to protest GOP military action in the province. The ruling Pakistan People's Party (PPP) met on July 30 and made plans to form a fact-finding committee to investigate what happened during the renewed conflict as many Baloch nationalists are alleging atrocities were committed by Frontier Corps (FC) troops. End summary.

Fighting Breaks Out Again

¶2. (SBU) Fighting between GOP forces and Baloch nationalists broke out in Balochistan's Dera Bugti, Kohlu and Jarrarabad districts on July 19, after a bomb blast killed a Pakistan Petroleum Limited engineer and several members of his security escort. The Balochistan Republican Army (BRA) claimed responsibility for the bomb blasts, which triggered the heaviest fighting in the area in over eighteen months. (Comment: Control of Balochistan's natural resources is a key tenet behind the province's nationalist movement. The killing of an employee of a national oil company with offices in the province appears to have been an attempt to reinforce that claim. End comment.)

Unknown Number of Casualties, Internally Displaced

¶3. (C) The GOP has banned news organizations from entering the areas where the fighting is occurring. As a result, there are widely diverging casualty estimates. GOP officials claim that 52 Baloch militants and 12 security personnel have died in the renewed fighting to date. A spokesperson for the Balochistan Republican Party (BRP) told PolOff on July 29 that 70 Baloch tribesmen have been killed and over 100 injured thus far. He added that 30 FC troops have died and 200 Baloch families have been uprooted as a result of the hostilities.

Popular Resentment

¶4. (C) Baloch nationalists have taken to the airways to protest the fighting. One BRA nationalist claimed his group was fighting to prevent exploitation of the resources of the &Baloch nation.⁸ Another claimed in a Yahoo web group that FC forces were committing numerous atrocities against innocent citizens. In response to a BRP call for a general strike to protest the army operations, most of the province shut down on July 25.

PPP Action

¶5. (C) Leshkari Raisani, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Provincial President for Balochistan, told Post on August 1 that the PPP met on July 30 and decided to form a committee to investigate the fighting at Dera Bugti. (Comment: Raisani seemed reluctant to give details about the meeting to Post. End comment.) The PPP controls the provincial government.

Comment

¶6. (C) The Balochistan Republican Party (BRP), until May 26 known as the Jamhoori Watan Party, is the political wing of the Balochistan Republican Army (BRA). Both the BRP and the BRA are believed to be headed by Brahamdagh Khan Bugti (grandson of slain Baloch nationalist Nawab Akber Bugti), who is purportedly in exile in Afghanistan. The younger Bugti (approximately 30 years old) supposedly witnessed the death of his septuagenarian grandfather in Dera Bugti at the hands

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of the military in August 2006.

¶7. (C) Comment continued: Renewed fighting between GOP troops and Baloch nationalists could not come at a worse time for the GOP. Economic and security concerns are taking on increased importance as the Pakistani people grapple with rising inflation, scarce electricity and an alarming security situation. The struggle between the (often secular) Baloch nationalists and the army could also require the GOP to divert military resources from the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) and the tribal areas to Balochistan.

Anske